

King County
Department of Community and Human Resources
Community Services Division

**REACHING BACK - GIVING BACK
DETENTION ALTERNATIVES FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTHS**

Final Evaluation Report

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Reaching Back - Giving Back Final Evaluation Report

I. Introduction

This document contains the findings for the final evaluation conducted on the Reaching Back - Giving Back project's first year under the management of the Society of Council Representing Accused Persons (SCRAP). The report builds upon an interim evaluation report prepared in July 1999. The findings of the interim report are referenced in this document as appropriate, but not all information is repeated here. Findings are based on three types of data: process data from staff logs and management reports, outcome data based on client assessments and juvenile justice records, and qualitative data based on interviews. Each type of data is reported in a respective section below.

The Reaching Back - Giving Back project was initiated in October 1998. By November of that year, all SCRAP staff for the project had been hired and sub contracts were established. Initial screening is conducted by SCRAP staff, case management is provided by a part-time staff person at SCRAP and two contract staff from Central Family and Youth Services (CF&YS). Outreach services are provided by contract through Vision Youth. Operationally, the name of the project was changed to the Royal project.

With the approval of the project evaluator, the director adopted the Washington State Juvenile Court Administrators Risk Assessment Tool as the primary data collection tool for Reaching Back - Giving Back. On December 15, 1998, CY&FS and SCRAP agreed to use the tool for the collection of all client information. The risk assessment software was obtained from Allvest, Inc. and was loaded on all case management computers.

II. Process Data

Screening

Potential clients have been screened for project eligibility since October 1998. In the past 13 months, a total of 179 clients were screened, and of those, 66 were referred for case management services. The table below presents the number of clients screened each month of the project's operation. The number of youths referred and subsequently screened diminished early in 1999 as the project had reached its capacity.

Month	Number Screened	Number Approved
Oct-98	4	2
Nov-98	16	13
Dec-98	27	12
Jan-99	14	5
Feb-99	4	0
Mar-99	8	2
Apr-99	12	0
May-99	3	0
Jun-99	5	0
Jul-99	8	5
Aug-99	30	11
Sep-99	18	8
Oct-99	17	5
Nov-99	13	3
TOTAL	179	66

Client Caseloads

Case management services were provided beginning November 1998. During the past year, 62 youths were placed on active case management status (cumulative unduplicated count). The project reached maximum capacity of 30 clients receiving case management services by December 1998. The majority of clients in the first cohort completed the program by June 1999 and new clients were enrolled over the following five months. By November 1999 the project had not reached full capacity again. The table below presents the number of clients on active caseload status for each month of the project's operation. In addition, the last column indicates the number of bed-nights (sum of youths and overnight stays) the residential shelter was used.

Active Caseload

Month	CM1	CM2	CM3	Total	Successful Terminations	Unsuccessful Terminations	Unduplicated Count	Bed-nights
Nov-98	8	9	1	18			18	0
Dec-98	12	12	6	30			30	25
Jan-99	13	13	4	30			30	30
Feb-99	12	13	5	30		1	30	28
Mar-99	12	12	6	30		1	30	40
Apr-99	12	12	6	30			30	60
May-99	0	0	30	30			30	26
Jun-99	6	0	2	8	20	2	38	0
Jul-99	9	0	3	12			42	0
Aug-99	8	7	2	17	2		47	0
Sep-99	11	10	5	26			55	26
Oct-99	10	12	5	27	4	2	60	22
Nov-99	11	12	3	26	1	2	62	14

Assessments

The Reaching Back - Giving Back project was designed to serve youths at high risk of being placed in secure detention. Research indicates that these are youths with a high need for social services. To determine which youths best fit the profile of a youth at risk, the project chose to use the Washington State Juvenile Court Administrators Risk Assessment Tool. The tool scores assessment information for both justice and social service issues. Software developed to enter data and calculate risk scores, also serves as a case management tracking tool. The capability to periodically reassess youths allows the tool also to be used for evaluation purposes. Two versions of the tool were used, requiring two databases be maintained for each site. The newer version was implemented during the summer of 1999.

The table below presents a summary of the risk assessment information in the databases by case management site. Data entry into the database began in January 1999. Information was entered for 55 of the 62 clients reported enrolled. As shown, assessment scores are available for 49 clients although 18 of these youths were assessed only once. Two clients entered in both databases are tallied only once below.

Database Entries

CYFS	# Youths	Multiple Assessments	One Assessment	Incomplete Assessments
old DB	23	11	10	2
new DB	25	13	8	4
sub	49	25	18	6
SCRAP				
old DB	4	4	0	0
new DB	3	3	0	0
sub	7	7	0	0
TOTAL	55	31	18	6

Initial risk scores for all youths assessed are summarized below. These scores ranged for 17 (low risk) to 70 (moderately high). The risk level for most clients was moderate (24 clients) and moderately low (19 clients).

Risk Scores

CYFS	# Youths Assessed	Low Risk	Moderately Low	Moderate Risk	Moderately High	Unknown Risk
old DB	23	1	7	10	3	2
new DB	25	0	11	9	1	4
sub	48	1	18	19	4	6
SCRAP						
old DB	4	0	1	2	1	0
new DB	3	0	0	3	0	0
sub	7	0	1	5	1	0
TOTAL	55	1	19	24	5	6

III. Outcomes

Risk Assessments

A primary measure of project effectiveness is change in the assessment score. As summarized in the following table, 31 clients were assessed more than once. Of these, only 14 were reassessed after three or more months (> 90 days) since the initial assessment. Most reassessment scores were similar or identical to the initial assessment score. The average change was 3.0. However, five clients' scores decreased substantially (13.5 to 22.4 points). A paired score t-test, calculated to determine if the change in scores was significant, resulted in a statistically significant t-score.

The five clients with reduced risk scores represent 16 percent of the 31 clients for whom multiple assessments were conducted, or 8.1 percent of the total client population. Four out of the five youths were initially assessed with moderate risk scores and one with moderately high score. Two of the clients, one from SCRAP and one from CYFS were in the program for an extended period spanning the use of the old and new assessment software.¹

	Change in Risk				
	First Score	Last Score	Score Change	Days Btwn	INI-Comp
CYFS Old DB	68.4	68.4	0	92	0
	52.2	52.2	0	67	0
	27	27	0	102	0
	33	33	0	218	147
	41	41	0	86	0
	35.7	35.7	0	105	0
	54.9	54.9	0	101	0
	45.1	45.1	0	43	0
	29	29	0	86	0
	49.6	49.6	0	71	0
	32.2	35.3	-3.1	107	0
	49.6	51	-1.4	92	0
	49	26.6	22.4	57	0
	32.8	30.8	2	23	0
CYFS New DB	30	22.1	7.9	30	0
	64.4	43.6	20.8	256	56
	43.1	44.7	1.6	30	-1
	33.8	33.8	0	58	0
	39.1	39.1	0	95	0
	31.3	31.3	0	23	0
	37.2	36.2	1	97	-1
	52.6	54.9	-2.3	49	30
	24.7	25.5	-0.8	63	0

¹ Staff note that one of the five youths with a positive outcome was not an active participant in program activities. Another youth, featured as a Royal success in a Seattle Post-Intelligencer feature article (11/20/99), is not included in the data as he had only an initial assessment.

	40	22.1	17.9	50	0
(Continued)	First Score	Last Score	Score Change	Days Btwn	INI-Comp
SCRAP Old DB	46	46	0	131	3
	50	48.5	1.5	131	0
	22	22	0	133	0
	64.7	64.7	0	64	0
SCRAP New DB	46.8	49.3	-2.5	58	0
	52.9	34.6	18.3	311	0
	45.7	32.2	13.5	51	0
Avg	42.7	39.7	3.0	92.9	7.5
T-test sig.	0.028				
count	31				

Detention

A major goal of the program is to reduce the amount of time youths spend in detention. To assess this goal, the evaluators obtained juvenile justice data, based on each client's Juvenile Court Number (JCN), from the King County Department of Youth Services JJWAN system. Court records were retrieved for 53 youths for whom valid Juvenile Court Numbers were available. Of these, 50 youths have at some time been placed in detention. Of these youths, 48 were placed in detention 266 times for a total of 4,593 days, prior to being enrolled in the program. After enrollment, 26 youths were placed in detention 56 times for a total of 860 days. This detention time includes 51 sentences to detention for 653 days, often for offenses committed prior to enrollment in the program.

Note that the time from enrollment in the program to the end of November 1999, when data were extracted (the follow-up period), is typically shorter than the time between the first detention and enrollment. To make the time periods before and after enrollment comparable, the number of days in the follow-up period were calculated and detention episodes were enumerated for the same time period before enrollment. Using similar time periods, the previous table shows that clients were detained 101 times for 1,913 days before enrollment, compared to 56 times for 860 days after. A paired score t-test, calculated to determine if the change in scores was significant, resulted in a statistically significant t-scores for both the number of detentions and the number of days detained.

Detention Times Detained Before RBGB	Days Detained Before RBGB	Times Detained After RBGB	Days Detained After RBGB	Follow-Up Days	Times Detained Before RBGB follow-up per	Days Detained Before RBGB follow-up per
5	17			343	5	17
9	148	1	25	320	3	79
6	28	2	28	302	2	5
8	153			103	1	26
5	45	1	21	324	1	6
10	110	1	43	144		
4	148			115	2	58
3	28			62	2	19
4	56	5	26	303	4	56
8	304	3	38	303	6	112
7	161			103	1	7
2	7	1	2	348	2	7
13	228	3	87	257	3	84
2	26	2	69	113		
9	80	1	62	264	5	65
1	87	2	21	287	1	87
3	41			58	1	18
5	48	4	33	64	2	22
11	128			65	1	25
6	112			34	1	
9	269	5	30	159	1	48
1	2			32	1	2
11	187	3	7	144	1	43
1	17			69	1	17
8	126	2	3	34	1	5
10	131	2	7	65	1	9
9	277			106	2	97
5	142	1	38	55		
5	102			100	2	86
6	104	4	25	272	5	101
3	49	1	20	107	1	10
6	81			82	1	17
3	95			104	2	92
4	18			287	4	18
11	139	2	73	293	5	115
6	61	1	8	303	6	61
1	5	1	16	327		
8	132			36	1	54
6	145			303	3	125
4	75	3	46	323	4	75
7	170	1		36	1	22
5	108			69	2	48
4	14			91	2	4
1	9			306	1	9
7	139	3	98	268	6	121
1	33			244	1	33
		1	34			
1	2			282	1	2
1	5			71	1	5
1	1			65	1	1
266	4593	56	860	mean= 175.4	101	1913
t-test sig.					.00	.00

Court Referrals

Given the availability of data, the number of referrals to court before and after enrollment were also analyzed. As summarized in the table on the following page, clients were referred to court 758 times prior to enrollment and 92 times after. Equally sized time periods were again calculated for comparative purposes. Using the standardized time periods, the clients accounted for 224 referrals to court before enrollment compared to 92 referrals after enrollment. A paired score t-test, found the difference in the number of referrals to be statistically significant.

Services

Initially, services provided to each client were to be reflected monthly in the risk assessment database. Given that case managers found the data system to be cumbersome, recommendations were made to use written logs to record the services provided each client. In addition, logs were to be kept by the outreach workers to reflect the number of contact hours with each client each month. While, some service records were kept, the record keeping was inconsistent and the resultant information does not lend itself to analysis.

Referrals

Referrals Before RBGB	Referrals After RBGB	Follow-Up Days	Referrals Before RBGB follow-up per
26	0	343	19
13	2	320	4
14	1	302	3
23	0	104	0
34	0	324	4
29	1	144	2
2	0	72	0
13	0	115	4
10	0	62	0
20	13	303	12
25	2	303	20
18	0	103	3
4	6	348	3
39	8	257	5
11	2	113	5
21	5	264	8
10	3	287	7
8	0	58	2
10	0	65	2
25	0	65	0
20	1	34	1
29	6	159	3
5	1	32	1
29	2	144	4
3	1	69	1
16	3	34	1
18	4	65	2
18	0	106	3
16	0	56	0
14	1	100	3
9	7	272	0
7	4	107	1
18	0	82	3
19	0	104	6
6	0	287	5
29	0	293	16
8	3	303	6
3	2	327	1
18	0	36	3
23	0	303	13
9	5	323	7
19	1	36	3
12	0	69	0
21	1	91	12
4	0	306	4
14	4	268	10
6	0	244	6
2	0	327	2
2	0	282	2
3	1	71	1
3	2	65	1
758	92	mean = 175.4	224
t-test sig			0.00

IV. Findings From Interviews

Introduction

This section of the report outlines key qualitative findings on the Royal Project. The material presented here is based principally on telephone interviews conducted in November 1999 with project staff and with judicial officials familiar with the project.² This special project, involving the collaborative partnership of five community-based agencies, commenced almost a year previous. Because much of the project's start-up experience was documented in interim findings already presented, this report's emphasis is on more recent project activity from June through November 1999. However, to provide a sense of continuity, evaluation information collected earlier in the year is also woven into this final report.

The current evaluation focused on aspects of the program that were clearly evolving over time or had not been substantially explored in the previous examinations of the program. These aspects included:

- Youth Outreach Worker Component
- Community Mobilization/Involvement Component
- Employment Component
- Emergency Shelter Component
- Project Management and Coordination
- Community Perceptions of the Project

Youth Outreach Worker Component

A core feature of the project design involved the linking of each participant to a youth outreach worker or YOW. The YOWs were assigned to a participant through Vision Youth, one of the main partners in the Royal project. The primary purpose of the YOW was to serve as a mentor, complementing the formal, professional role played by the case manager. Since the beginning of the project the YOWs' responsibilities included maintaining regular contact with the client; offering support; providing opportunities for the client to participate in community activities; and connecting Royal youth with other community resources.

² The most recent round of evaluation interviews included representatives from each of the partnering agencies (ECOM, YouthCare, Vision Youth and Central Youth and Family Services), SCRAP administrative staff, case managers and superior court judges who had handled cases involving Royal clients.

Changes in the YOW Component

In the early months of the project, lack of clear coordination and supervision guidelines for the YOWs appeared to have hampered implementation of this component. Basic information exchange between the YOWs, case managers and SCRAP was sometimes absent, making it difficult for the project to capitalize on the strong community links YOWs potentially offered. Moreover, partnering agencies initially did not manifest a strong, shared vision as to how and when YOWs would participate in the project.

Over the course of the first year, however, the YOW component experienced a succession of changes designed to strengthen its contribution to the project. These changes were precipitated, in part, by major staffing changes in the project that occurred in the spring of 1999 (as detailed in a previous set of findings presented to the project funder in July 1999). At this time a new project director and new YOW coordinator joined the Royal Project and reorganized several aspects of the YOW component, as described below.

More immediate involvement of YOWs: During the early implementation phase of the project the YOW role was less prominent, primarily because case managers were reluctant to involve YOWs during the first several weeks of working with a participant. Case managers alone determined when a YOW would be brought into a case, and the actual assignment was made by the SCRAP screener. This practice of delaying YOW assignment created uncertainty for Vision Youth as to when or whether Royal participants would be assigned to a YOW. It also represented a philosophical departure from the original program concept, which emphasized community involvement (through the YOWs) as a distinguishing project feature.

In agreeing to match youth to a YOW right after the youth's enrollment, SCRAP brought the project full circle back to its original concept. Youth were to be assigned to both a case manager and a YOW more or less simultaneously, so that the professional case management and community relationship-building aspects of the projects were more equally emphasized. In addition, this move put the two project partners more philosophically in tune with each other.

New YOW responsibilities: Not only the timing but also the nature of the YOWs involvement with participants shifted in the spring and summer. When the two full time case managers left precipitously, YOWs were called upon to attend hearings and trials of those participants facing ongoing legal issues. Formerly this court role had been reserved for the case managers. The project anticipated that YOWs would continue serving in this capacity, even after new case managers came on board. However, it is not clear whether YOWs have been able to sustain their involvement in this arena. Findings from the most recent interviews suggest that case managers

have once again subsumed much of this role. Current case managers did not include attendance in court as a formal expectation of the assigned YOW. Judges who were interviewed were aware of sporadic attendance of YOWs in their court rooms but did not appear to perceive YOW participation in court as a routine aspect of Royal.

Reduction in caseload: Another small, but important change was the reduction in the number of Royal clients the YOW was expected to handle at one time. Originally, the project envisioned the individual YOW handling up to five Royal clients. As highlighted in the interim evaluation report, this original expectation evoked concern from the YOWs because of the intensity of service required for Royal clients, compared to their non-Royal mentees. The project subsequently reduced the maximum Royal caseload to two clients per YOW. The YOW coordinator characterized the new caseload as more realistic, given the requirement that outreach workers meet at least once a week, as well as have a substantive phone interaction with their Royal mentees.

Changes in assignment and supervision: As mentioned earlier, SCRAP initially handled YOW assignments and case managers dictated when assignments were made. By mid-year the project reorganized their approach to YOW assignment, devolving this responsibility to Vision Youth as part of their YOW coordination responsibilities. At the same time expectations about how the assignment process was to occur were more clearly spelled out between the two organizations. SCRAP was to alert the Vision Youth Coordinator as soon as a new enrollee came into the program and then Vision Youth had 48 hours to make an assignment.

The interim evaluation report noted a lack of clear and workable supervision structures for the YOWs. During initial project implementation none of the three partners involved with the YOWs (SCRAP, CY&FS and Vision Youth) were satisfied with coordination and supervision arrangements, and all were in favor of strengthening this aspect of the YOW component. Initially, the Project placed YOW supervision responsibilities on the case managers. The original project design called for each case manager to oversee five to eight YOWs. However, this approach was never satisfactory because the organizational structure gave case managers no real authority over the YOWs; the latter were employees of various churches and reported to their individual pastors. Moreover, case managers were reluctant to take on this additional charge on top of their case management activities. It appears that the project backed away from this untenable supervision structure, but as described later, it has not been easy to substitute an alternative supervision structure in its place.

Improved Overall Coordination of the YOW Component: In the second half of its first year the project appeared to develop smoother coordination around the YOW component. Vision Youth moved into the same building as SCRAP, facilitating

communication between the two key partners.³ In contrast with earlier findings, partners now had a more coherent vision of how the YOWs were to be utilized. A number of coordination details had been spelled out and YOWs were being more consistently assigned to entering clients.⁴ Whereas earlier in the project many of the staff expressed confusion or concern as to the best use of the YOWs, staff now seemed more comfortable with YOW participation. However, as discussed further below, coordination issues remained.

Continuing Issues Related to the YOW Component

While the project appeared to have made some major strides in strengthening this component, some potential problems may have persisted. The following issues emerged from recent staff interviews.

Supervision of the YOWs: Supervision and accountability of the YOWs continued to pose some challenges for the project. Vision Youth was directly responsible for coordinating and training the YOWs, but direct supervision had always been the responsibility of the individual churches and their pastors, under whom the YOWs served. Neither the Vision Youth Director nor the SCRAP Project director appeared to have been in a position to superimpose project supervision over YOW activities. As a result, the project has not been able to establish quality control guidelines and procedures for the YOWs as a whole. For example, the project continued to have difficulty obtaining accurate client contact logs from this very decentralized group. Most recently the project implemented an accountability policy that linked completion of the required contact log to issuance of the YOW's paycheck. After the announcement of this policy the project director noted a substantial increase in YOW compliance with record keeping and reporting requirements. However, the policy did not speak to the broader issue of oversight and assurance of quality services in the field.

In fairness to the project, the partnership structure presented some unusual challenges to project management. In particular, the exceptionally decentralized nature of Vision Youth's cadre of outreach workers posed special problems. While guidelines and expectations for YOWs had been established, the project really had not yet defined and executed effective options for monitoring and holding YOWs accountable.

Delays in assigning and involving YOWs: Despite clearer guidelines for immediate assignment of YOWs, there appeared to be some continued delays in involving

³ Representatives from both organizations concurred that communication and coordination around the YOW component had improved substantially in the last several months. Moreover, both were able to articulate some of the specific coordination improvements put in place. This was in marked contrast to earlier perceptions of the project.

⁴ One case manager, however, reported that YOWs had not been very consistently assigned to clients, but was uncertain as to the cause.

YOWs with the youth. It was not clear whether the source of the delay was due to assignments not being handed to case managers in a timely fashion or due to case managers and YOWs not being able to connect. Delayed involvement of YOWs may have made it more difficult for the YOWs to develop a relationship with the client (see below). At the time of this report, the project was in the process of examining this issue further.

Coordination with the case manager: A related issue was coordination between the case manager and the YOW. Case managers and YOWs communicated primarily on an ad hoc basis by phone. Some YOWs continued to be difficult to connect with; the case manager did not always know how the mentoring aspect of a case had been proceeding. One case manager expressed concern over project expectation that case managers needed to bear primary responsibility for coordinating and communicating with YOWs, when staying in contact sometimes proved difficult and time consuming.

Reluctance of clients to work with YOWs: Another theme to emerge from interviews was the inherent difficulty in linking Royal participants to YOWs. Some clients openly refused to talk with a YOW, according to case managers. Others perhaps passively avoided contact. Case managers believed that Royal clients in general had a difficult time opening up to and trusting any adult. The project's expectation that a youth would forge a relationship with not just one, but two new adults, was viewed as somewhat unrealistic, at least for some significant portion of the youth. At the same time, case managers reaffirmed that the mentoring component of the project was critical to its long-term success. They had witnessed some very positive connections between YOWs and their clients. However, it was not clear how widespread these successes were or whether they tended to emerge or be more visible after the client had been in the program for a period of time. These would be important questions to pursue in developing a programmatic response to this issue.

Community Involvement

As described in the interim evaluation report the project's initial design called for blending a community involvement and mobilization approach with a more traditional case management approach to achieving positive client outcomes. The combining of distinct approaches initially complicated implementation goals and created additional challenges for the project. In the early implementation phase, the project struggled with how best to define the community involvement component, developing plans for a series of stand alone social and informational events to tie the project to the community it served. These plans were not clearly integrated into the project as a whole and placed additional administrative burdens on the already stretched-thin administrative resources of SCRAP.

As the project matured, it substantially narrowed its concept of community involvement, focusing on the YOWs as the critical connector between youth being

served and a broader community network of volunteer and other resources. While the project's ultimate approach to community involvement became more limited than initially envisioned, it was also more appropriate and feasible, given limited project resources and the complexity of managing multi-agency collaboration.

Secure Emergency Shelter Component

Since its inception the project included an emergency shelter component through Youth Care, a nonprofit organization providing temporary and transitional housing services to youth. The project paid for a reserved bed in Youth Care's Graham Street facility, which was available to the project at all times for a Royal client in need of housing. Shelter staff provided around the clock supervision and additional case management and support services to clients.

Utilization of Shelter Services

The Royal project used the emergency bed at Youth Care on a fairly consistent basis throughout the year, according to both agencies. According to the project director the bed was filled 232 days of the year through November 1, 1999, or approximately 77 percent of the time period. In addition, the project also occasionally used a second emergency bed at the shelter. However, the cost of the additional bed was prohibitive, reducing the project's ability to provide these services to every client who might need them.

Coordination Among Partners

Whereas other components of the project faced coordination and programming issues, this component appeared to run relatively smoothly from the start. The lead case manager coordinated all Royal requests for shelter services directly with Youth Care's case manager. The shelter performed a formal intake on the Royal client to determine suitability for services and level of supervision required. Once the client was housed at Youth Care, Royal case managers coordinated supervision and other issues with the Youth Care case manager.

The main issue to arise out the Youth Care component had to do with the suitability of some Royal clients. The shelter was reluctant to take on clients with behavioral problems that required a high level of security and supervision. Youth care staff were concerned that they did not always have sufficient information at intake to determine suitability of the Royal client. For example, at least one Royal client was referred who had a background of disturbing sexual conduct. The shelter ended up retaining the client, but was not happy with the situation, and did not want to repeat it. However, Youth Care staff acknowledged that the intake problem might be beyond anyone's control, since the Royal case managers themselves did not always have extensive information on the client at the point of intake.

Value of the Emergency Services

A key theme to emerge from interviews was the importance of having the option to place clients in quality emergency housing. Some of their clients were so estranged from their families or had such a terrible home environment that a judge would not consider placing them back in the custody of family. For these clients the Youth Care shelter was the only alternative to detention. The structured environment at the shelter gave these youth the opportunity to prove that they could stay out of trouble, an opportunity they would not have if they were placed in detention. Of the six clients who used the shelter in 1999, case managers believe that most or all of these clients would have ended up in detention solely because they had nowhere else to go.

Employment Component

As described in the interim evaluation report, full implementation of the project's employment component was delayed approximately two months due to staffing and funding problems. In February 1999 Emerald City Outreach Ministries (ECOM) began offering employment preparation services to Royal clients who were ready to seek employment. ECOM's services included career exploration, skills assessment, resume writing, interview preparation and other job search assistance. In addition, through its contacts in the business community, ECOM offered placement assistance. These services were designed to be presented to clients in a sequenced series of modules involving on-on-one assistance from ECOM staff. The ultimate goal of the ECOM component was successful employment of the client. Case managers determined when clients were ready for these services and then made a referral.

Strengths of Component

The ECOM component appeared to have many strengths. It offered comprehensive, personalized, community-based services that might be hard to find elsewhere. It was conveniently located for many clients in the Central District neighborhood. Case managers and SCRAP staff generally perceived the program to be well-run and committed to the partnership. ECOM was also successful in locating numerous potential job opportunities for Royal youth, a group that would be challenging to place. Despite these advantages, however, the ECOM component was never fully realized.

The main issue the ECOM component faced was the lack of steady referrals from Royal. The case managers found very few of their clients to be ready for these services; over the course of nearly eight months case managers referred only about eight clients to ECOM. Of those who were referred the majority did not show up for

appointments, did not complete the training modules and did not obtain a job.⁵ ECOM staff attempted to scale back the services and “fast track” Royal clients, but even this program accommodation did not retain potential clients past the first or second meeting.

Perceived Mismatch in Services

Both the project director and case managers concluded that the ECOM program, as currently structured, could not meet the needs of most of the youth being served in Royal. It was designed to serve the job-ready or nearly job ready. A large percentage of the Royal client base, they believed, were not job-ready because they were struggling with drug and alcohol addiction, were emotionally unstable or still had ongoing legal issues. In addition, they found that 15-16 year olds were generally not mature enough to take on employment responsibilities. Finally, case managers argued that many of the clients were facing so many challenges just trying to stay in school and stay out of trouble that they could not handle the additional challenge of looking for or keeping a job. Ecom’s experiences with the Royal youth who were referred, while limited, added further evidence that services available were not well matched to the client pool.

At the time of this report the project was planning to curtail the ECOM contract to reflect the small proportion of clients likely to be served by ECOM in the future. Case managers also proposed that the project consider utilizing services that were more oriented towards transitioning youth towards market employment, such as structured work experience. A related issue raised was the timing of services. Case managers were also more hopeful of linking kids with employment during the summer when clients had more time to devote to a job.

Project Coordination and Management

One of the project’s strongest management assets continued to be the goodwill and understanding among the partnering agencies. Relationships between SCRAP and all of its partners appeared to be generally positive and partners acknowledged that the project director worked hard to keep them informed. SCRAP’s lead case manager and screener met regularly with Central’s two case managers and forged solid communication and coordination links with the new case managers when they came into the project.

In contrast with the first six months of implementation, the project no longer contended with major coordination, contracting or staffing issues. As mentioned earlier, coordination around the YOW component improved substantially after the first six months of operations. Moreover, the new project director worked to clarify

⁵ A handful of these Royal clients may have obtained jobs on their own without the knowledge of ECOM staff.

the different agency and staff roles and to initiate regular communication with the various partners. Representatives from the various partnering agencies (ECOM, Vision Youth, Youth Care and Central Youth and Family Services) perceived communication and coordination with SCRAP to be adequate to very good.

The preceding sections have already described some of the continuing coordination challenges associated with the decentralized YOW structure. Some additional management and coordination issues to surface through interviews are highlighted below:

Utility of the ECOM component: While there may have been consistent communication among the SCRAP, ECOM and the case manager, it is not clear whether the case managers' views of the component had been fully aired. Case managers perceived the ECOM component to be mismatched to their clients' abilities and needs, yet ECOM did not seem to be aware of the strong doubts the case managers had about the viability of the component. It appeared that once the project committed to using ECOM's services SCRAP management was reluctant to intervene with programs, even after it became clear that these services were essentially not being used by case managers.

Accountability and supervision issues: The project's partnership structure posed inherent difficulties for management in terms of oversight and accountability. SCRAP, as the administrative entity, was responsible for ensuring that project staff carried out their required responsibilities and provided quality services. The project director was drawn into a quasi-supervisory role, yet he had no real authority over staff from partnering agencies. This problem had already been raised in conjunction with the YOWs, but was also a potential issue with case managers, as well. It appeared that the director relied on interactions directly with CY&FS case managers. In addition, the SCRAP lead case manager provided supervision related to the handling of cases, while ultimate authority over the case managers still rested with CY&FS.

Coordination of Services Through Case Managers: The original project design included "service teams" as an integral part of the case managers' coordination role. The team were to be composed of the case manager, probation counselor, youth outreach worker and other adults directly involved with the youth, such as a parent or teacher. As originally envisioned, the service teams were to offer a regular forum for case managers and others to exchange information and to coordinate assessment and services. Ultimately, however, the idea of a formal service team was removed from the final project design; case managers were concerned that service team meetings would impose too great a coordination burden on everyone, but especially on case managers. Case managers were still responsible for coordinating with others, but were not required to meet face-to-face in a formal case staffing setting.

Assessing the degree and effectiveness of service team coordination was beyond the scope of the evaluation, however the limited information obtained on this aspect of the project suggested that case managers coordinated with other significant actors, but not in a formal, structured or systematic fashion. Major barriers to systematic coordination included lack of organizational stability within the juvenile probation system, staff turnover within the project and difficulties coordinating with the decentralized YOWs, as outlined earlier. It was not clear whether this more ad hoc approach to coordination of services decreased project effectiveness or whether all feasible coordination options had been adequately explored.

Community Perceptions of Royal

Project evaluators sought to collect community-based assessments of the project to complement information collected from project staff. Evaluators interviewed the three King County Superior Court judges who were most in contact with Royal clients during the past 12 months.⁶ Findings from these interviews were limited for at least three reasons: 1) Judges were not always aware that they had seen a Royal client. They did not necessarily connect the case manager or YOW presence in the courtroom with the project. 2) A significant portion of the juvenile offender hearings in Seattle were conducted by various temporary judges filling in for a vacant position. 3) The judges did not necessarily handle cases from start to finish and therefore were not necessarily able to assess what happened to a client once he/she was involved with Royal.

Due to their limited exposure to the project, judges could not comment substantively on the project's influence on clients. However, the interviews yielded other findings related to project processes, which are presented below.

General awareness of and support for the project: Judges were all generally aware of the project and strongly supportive of the project's concept. All remembered specific clients that ended up with Royal and indicated that the presence of either a YOW or case manager had positively influenced them in their decision to release a client. In particular they emphasized the value of combining case management with mentorship. They felt that the project's goal of providing a role model and connecting clients to "pro-social" activities meshed with their own perceptions of what Royal clients needed.

Project served the hard-to-serve: Judges concurred that the project was appropriately targeting its services to youth who were both high risk for re-

⁶ Originally evaluators explored the possibility of interviewing both judges and defense attorneys. Unfortunately, identifying and contacting the appropriate attorneys in a timely manner proved not feasible, given the budget and time constraints of the project.

offending and high need for social intervention. They stressed that many of the youth came from very difficult or “terrible” family situations.

Need for better information on the project: All the judges expressed a desire to know more about the program and its accomplishments. Two commented on the need for the project to advertise itself more widely across the juvenile justice system. They felt that key actors such as probation counselors might not be as aware as they should be of the project.⁷

V Conclusions/Recommendations

Positive outcomes : Statistically significant positive outcomes were noted for all program measures. After enrollment, project clients recorded lower risk scores, were detained less frequently and had fewer court referrals.

Improved project management : Project management generally appears to have been strengthened in the last four-to-five months. Communications between the various partnering entities seem to have improved; SCRAP has become more proactive in instigating regular communications with partners. Expectations regarding YOW and case manager activities have been clarified. Given the staffing challenges that occurred only six months ago, these improvements represent a significant positive accomplishment.

Project structure inherently difficult to manage : After reviewing project management issues three times in the past 12 months, we’ve concluded that the project’s collaborative model of decentralized service delivery is inherently difficult to manage centrally. SCRAP has no formal authority over the staff and agencies delivering the services. Management must either work directly, but informally with non-SCRAP staff or work indirectly through each agency’s reporting/authority structure when there is a problem. Neither option has proven totally satisfactory, from a management perspective. This is not to conclude that this kind of community-based partnership should not be used, but rather to point out that there are going to be trade-offs, at least in the short-term, in terms of management strength and efficiency.

Project needs to establish self-evaluation capabilities : With completion of a more formal evaluation, project management needs to determine how best to track client progress to determine program effectiveness. The emphasis on assessment and reducing risk scores appears to have been beneficial and should be continued. However, the currently used software appears to be difficult to understand and use

⁷ Evaluators also spoke informally with a defense attorney active in the issue of disproportional detention of African American youth. Her responses to questions about Royal also suggested that the project had not developed a high profile in the juvenile justice community. While this is not sufficient evidence to conclude that the project was not known in the justice community, it raises the question as to whether the project had publicized itself sufficiently.

without substantial training and technical assistance. In addition, the new software does not provide adequate numeric information to accurately assess risk level. Thus, a more flexible paper system or spreadsheet might provide a better means of recording data and making it available to project management. The evaluator strongly urges that reassessments be completed every 90 days following entry into the program.

Project management needs method to monitor services provided : At present, little is known about the level or type of services received by clients. Logs of contact hours from case managers and outreach workers are not consistently available. Thus, it is not possible to monitor the level of service provision. The evaluator recommends that service records be accurately maintained and recorded in a manner that facilitates management oversight. The evaluator also recommends tracking the status of each client in the program.

Further focus on the YOW component : Although the project has strengthened the YOW component, it requires further focus. The project needs to examine why some YOWs have been assigned very quickly and others have not; why some YOWs seem to have worked out and others have not. Are there still issues with the assignment process, the timing of the YOW contact or coordination with the case manager? Is it possible that greater flexibility is needed in the assignment process? If one YOW isn't connecting, would another one work? If the youth doesn't want a YOW, what should happen next? We recommend that the project try to bring case managers and YOWs together on a more regular basis (possibly at the weekly YOW meeting?) to explore these issues and create more of a team approach to problem-solving.

Coordination role of case managers : A related issue is the degree to which case managers will be responsible for coordinating services with other key actors, especially the YOWs. Currently, coordination is accomplished in an ad hoc manner, depending on the individual case, case manager and assigned YOW. Project management might wish to review the current service coordination practices of its case managers to ensure that adequate coordination is occurring.

Need to examine other employment training options : The project already has decided to cut back on the employment component because of limited use of these services. The project might also want to examine whether there are other suitable training options in the community that would better meet the needs of ROYAL youth. For example there may be transition to work services through the schools or community agencies that emphasize work maturity and other pre-employment skills, rather than direct employment.

Project outreach : Information from judicial officers, as well as from project staff, suggests that the project is not as visible within the juvenile justice system as it could be. In keeping a lower profile, the project runs the risk that its goals and

accomplishments will not receive adequate recognition within this important forum. Project staff made presentations to the judiciary and others at the beginning of its operations. However, additional informational outreach may again be necessary to keep important actors within the juvenile justice system and broader community informed and interested.